

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 EUR-12 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2451

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 5189

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, SCUL, MX, IS

SUBJECT: MEXICO TO HOST INTERFAITH PEACE AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
CONFERENCE

REF: RABAT 4064

1. CHIEF RABBI OF MEXICO AND PRESIDENT OF UNION OF
LATIN AMERICAN RABBIS DR. ABRAHAM M. HERSHBERG, CURRENTLY
ON A TOUR OF EUROPEAN AND MIDDLE EAST COUNTRIES, CALLED
ON CHARGE' JULY 27. HERSHBERG SAID THAT AS CHAIRMAN OF
THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF PEACE AND RELIGIOUS
FREEDOM HE IS NOW ORGANIZING A WORLD CONFERENCE ON
PEACE AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM TO OPEN IN MEXICO CITY ON
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NOVEMBER 15, 1976 UNDER THE SPONSORSHIP OF THE MEXICAN

GOVERNMENT, WHICH IS SUPPORTING HIS EFFORTS DIPLOMATICALLY AND HAS OFFERED TO DEFRAY ALL EXPENSES. THE CONFERENCE IS TO COINCIDE WITH THE OPENING OF THE "SPLENDID" THIRD WORLD UNIVERSITY IN MEXICO CITY WHICH WILL BE ITS SITE. KEY RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF ALL FAITHS, INCLUDING POPE PAUL, HAVE BEEN INVITED AND OUTGOING PRESIDENT LUIS ECHEVERRIA WILL BE IN THE CHAIR.

2. HERSHBERG SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED THE CONFERENCE AT GREAT LENGTH WITH ECHEVERRIA WHO, BY ASSUMING SPONSORSHIP ON BEHALF OF MEXICO, HOPES TO STRENGTHEN HIS COUNTRY'S IMAGE OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE, OPEN A NEW CHAPTER IN MEXICAN-VATICAN RELATIONS (ESPECIALLY IF HE CAN BRING THE POPE TO MEXICO), AND ENHANCE HIS OWN PRESTIGE IN THIRD WORLD BY LAUNCHING MIDDLE EAST INITIATIVE THROUGH RELIGIOUS GROUPS. NONE OF THESE GOALS, HERSHBERG NOTED, SHOULD DO HARM TO ECHEVERRIA'S DESIRE TO BECOME THE NEXT UNSYG.

3. HERSHBERG IS CURRENTLY STOPPING IN ISRAEL TO GET THE SUPPORT OF ISRAELI RELIGIOUS AND GOVERNMENTAL LEADERS FOR THE CONFERENCE. HOWEVER, HE HAS INDICATED SOME NERVOUSNESS ABOUT HIS RECEPTION IN THE LIGHT OF ECHEVERRIA'S AND MEXICO'S CURRENTLY POOR PUBLIC IMAGE HERE. HE HOPES TO SEE PRESIDENT KATZIR AND PRIME MINISTER RABIN, AMONG OTHERS, IN AN ENDEAVOR TO OBTAIN THEIR ENDORSEMENT FOR THE ATTENDANCE OF ISRAEL'S CHIEF RABBIS AND, PERHAPS, A PROMINENT PERSONAGE LIKE GOLDA MEIR.

4. THE RABBI HAS ALREADY VISITED MOROCCO, TUNISIA, ALGERIA, EGYPT, BRITAIN, FRANCE, ITALY AND THE VATICAN TO EXTEND HIS INVITATIONS. HE REPORTS THAT HE WAS WARMLY RECEIVED AT HIGH LEVELS AND PROMISED FULL SUPPORT FOR THE CONFERENCE. THE MAIN CONFERENCE THEMES WILL BE PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST THROUGH RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING, THE THREAT OF COMMUNISM TO ALL RELIGIONS, AND RELIGION FOR PEACE. HE PLANS TO GO FROM HERE TO IRAN, SYRIA, AND JORDAN.

5. HERSHBERG TOLD CHARGE' THAT VATICAN SECRETARY OF STATE CARDINAL VILLOT HAD PROMISED THAT POPE PAUL MIGHT ATTEND
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IF HIS HEALTH PERMITTED. HE ALSO CLAIMED ENDORSEMENT OF THE CONFERENCE BY MEXICAN CARDINAL MIRANDA, INDIRA GHANDI, EGYPTIAN PRIME MINISTER SALIM, KING HASSAN OF MOROCCO (AND HIS ADVISOR HALEVI), BHUDDIST LEADERS OF JAPAN AND THAILAND, THE SEPHARDIC AND ASHKENAZI CHIEF RABBIS OF ISRAEL, LEADERS OF THE PRINCIPAL JEWISH RELIGIOUS GROUPS OF THE U.S., CHIEF RABBIS OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE, SIR HAROLD WILSON, THE WORLD COUNCIL OF

CHURCHES, UNSYG WALDHEIM, AND GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES
OF SYRIA, JORDAN, AND LEBANON.

6. HERSHBERG POINTEDLY MENTIONED THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER HAD
WARMLY ENDORSED THE CONFERENCE PROJECT IN A TELEGRAM TO HIM AND
THAT HE HAD RECEIVED SIMILAR ASSURANCES FROM A WHITE HOUSE OFFICIAL.

7. COMMENT: WHILE THE GOI WILL PROBABLY WISH TO
BE REPRESENTED AT A SUITABLE LEVEL AT ANY SUCH CONFERENCE,
RABBI HERSHBERG, AS THE FIRST PROMINENT MEXICAN VISITOR
HERE SINCE ENTEBBE, WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO TAKE SOME
FLAK BECAUSE OF PUBLIC RESENTMENT AGAINST ECHEVERRIA'S
NEGATIVE COMMENTS ON THAT AFFAIR AND THE LINGERING
RESENTMENT OVER MEXICO'S POSITION ON THE ZIONISM/RACISM
ISSUE.
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